Wisconsin Pathways to Independence

Profiles

Tommy G. Thompson Governor

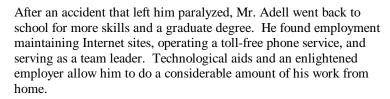


DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND FAMILY SERVICES

DEPARTMENT OF WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT



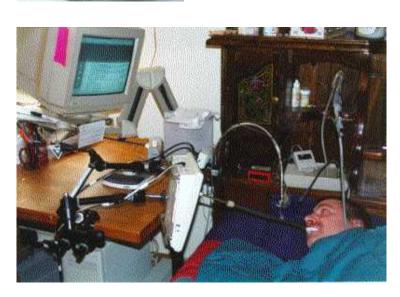






Just as Mr. Adell was able to eliminate his reliance on a ventilator to breathe, he also eliminated his dependence on disability payments from Social Security. He contributes about half of his income to taxes and to the cost of his health care.

A key provision of federal Medicare law allows Mr. Adell to retain health coverage for a limited time. Private health coverage is not available from his employer. But in 14 months his Medicare coverage will expire as a result of having employment earnings which exceed \$500 per month. Because he needs health care in order to live, Mr. Adell does not see a possibility for continuing to work if his Medicare coverage will end.



Top: Mr. Adell uses a microphone to "speak" to his computer. He can write letters, edit text, and create web pages.

Middle: Mr. Adell shown in front of the Department of Rehabilitation Psychology, University of Wisconsin-Madison, where he studied. Bottom: Mr. Adell works from home, where he can write up team notes, create web pages, answer and make telephone calls, and do other work-related tasks.

The employment and health care picture is even more complicated for Mr. Adell. If his <u>Medicare</u> coverage ends, he will lose his "disability status" under federal law. This will make him ineligible to qualify for the <u>Medicaid</u> coverage that would enable him to continue working in the absence of Medicare. Catch 22.

Mr. Adell has been working with *Wisconsin Pathways to Independence* to sort out his own options and also create new possibilities for others like him who have not yet been as successful in their vocational goals. Fortunately, both federal and state governments appear to be listening, and new options are being proposed.

Craig Hulburt

Mr. Hulburt is a valued member of the *Pathways* Advisory Council and also serves on the Client Advisory Committee for AIDS Network, a Madison based AIDS Service Organization. New drugs and excellent medical care have helped stabilize Mr. Hulburt's health. This has enabled him to begin exploring various return-to-work strategies.

Continuity of health care remains a very serious concern. Earning more than \$500 per month would cause a cascade of ill effects: (a) eventual loss of Medicare coverage which also leads to (b) loss of federal "disability status" which leads to (c) inability to qualify for the Medicaid-funded drugs which stabilize his health. In the past Mr. Hulburt has worked in data entry in the private sector. He would very much like to work in the future.



Karla Smith

Karla Smith is currently an employment counselor at Access to Independence, an independent living service located in Madison. When she was 30 years old, Karla's health condition forced her to live in a nursing home. where she was told she would be for the rest of her life. Through determination, effort, and persistence, and by utilizing state resources, Karla was able to leave the nursing home. Once independent, she involved herself in extensive volunteer activities, for which she received national recognition. She feared finding employment because she thought she would lose her medical assistance, but she did find fulfilling employment helping others to live independently. In her words, "I want to reach out to these people and say, "Don't give up. There is hope. You just gotta take it a little bit at a time. Don't give up."



Mike Reece

Mike has cerebral palsy, which often makes it difficult for others to understand his speech. He often uses a laptop computer to type his sentences and the laptop then "reads" his text. Mike was once told by instructors at a technical college that because of his disabilities, he could not pursue studies in accounting. However, he acquired his degree, inspired his instructors, and with the help of employment counseling, recently completed a 3-month internship as an accounting assistant. He currently seeks employment as an accounting assistant.



Derick Pearson

Since being in an auto accident when he was six years old, Mr. Pearson has relied on a ventilator to breathe for him. His youthful resiliency allowed him to compensate for losing the ability to talk or to write. At age 7, he taught himself Morse code. By using Morse code and "puff and sip" technology, he finished high school and later taught himself computer programming. Employment Resources, Inc. (a *Wisconsin Pathways* contractor) connected him with an employer, and the Wisconsin Division of Vocational Rehabilitation provided additional computer training.



(Right) Mr. Pearson attends a meeting at Employment Resources, Inc., a Wisconsin Pathways contractor, to discuss his employment situation and to investigate his future goals



Mr. Pearson receives training in designing web pages.

Mr. Pearson currently designs and maintains web pages for Madison Newspapers Inc. Old technologies (Morse code, puff and sip) have joined with the new cybernetic technologies to help create a vocational future.

Mr. Pearson relies on health and long term care coverage available through the state's Medicaid program. Because private health insurance does not pay for personal care or other long term care services, Medicaid is Mr. Pearson's lifeline.

(Left) Mr. Pearson, shown at work.



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